

public safety. These outstanding men and women have played an important role in building a better community. This hard work and determination has earned several citizens of Prince William County the highest honor bestowed upon county public safety officials—The Gold Medal Valor Award.

The Gold Medal is the highest award for bravery and heroism. It is awarded to emergency service officers who have knowingly placed themselves in peril of death or extreme harm while saving or attempting to save the lives of others.

It is with great honor that I recognize Firefighter Carrie Wilson of the Stonewall Jackson Volunteer Fire Department as a recipient of the Gold Medal Valor Award. Firefighter Wilson helped to avert possible deaths and injuries at an apartment fire by acting quickly and professionally. A prime example of her bravery was when she came to the aid of an engine officer after a balcony railing collapsed, despite the burning debris pouring onto the crew. Firefighter Wilson also took part in the Red Cross Emergency Response Team, assisting the twenty-four displaced families find accommodations. The Chamber has made an excellent decision in awarding Carrie Wilson this prestigious honor.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating this extraordinary citizen. In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the men and women who serve Prince William County. The events of September 11th served as a reminder of the sacrifices our emergency service workers make for us every day. Their constant efforts on behalf of Prince William County citizens are paramount to preserving security, law and order throughout our neighborhoods, and their individual and collective acts of heroism deserve our highest praise.

RECOGNIZING THE SOCIAL PROBLEM OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT, AND SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO ENHANCE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

SPEECH OF

HON. DAVE CAMP

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 113, the Child Abuse and Neglect Bill of 2003. This bill will support efforts to enhance public awareness of child abuse and neglect.

In the state of Michigan, where I am proud to represent the 4th District, the number of child abuse and neglect related fatalities have been steadily increasing since 1998. Again, in my state, there are 2.4 identified victims of child abuse per 1,000 Michigan residents. I emphasize, that statistic encapsulates identified victims only. I implore my fellow members of the House to think of the number of unreported cases. This sad fact proves that the American public is not fully aware of the problem presented by child neglect and abuse. Thus, a challenge lies before us. This is a challenge of committing every possible effort towards the elimination of child neglect and abuse.

Behind every number is a person, a child. Some of these children die because of child

neglect and abuse. Some of them simply never experience the love of a parent. Either situation is abominable and the American people need to be made aware of it.

The mission of this bill is to break the cycle of violence, especially with emphasis on the important first step of awareness. This bill intends to achieve a maximum awareness of child abuse and neglect.

Mr. Speaker, this is a worthy bill and an important step in the right direction. As a long time advocate for the oppressed children of our nation, I urge support for this bill. I yield back the balance of my time.

THE DEMOCRACY DAY ACT OF 2003

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 31, 2003

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the "Democracy Day Act of 2003," legislation that would provide a day off of work so that more of our citizens can vote. I am joined by Representatives CUMMINGS, RODRIGUEZ, WU, RANGEL, MCGOVERN, FROST, KILPATRICK, WOOLSEY, KAPTUR, CARSON (IN), and DAVIS (IL).

The United States is the greatest democratic republic in the history of civilization, and at the foundation of our democracy is the right to vote. This right was not simply handed to Americans; rather, it was hard won by many of our Nation's citizens. Today, active citizenship demands that Americans cast a vote to have their "say" in the political arena.

Despite this privilege, voter turnout has been declining since the 1960s in both Presidential and mid-term elections. Less than half of the voting age population (49.5 percent) voted in the 1996 Presidential election, and only 51.2 percent voted in the 2000 presidential election. The 1998 midterm elections saw the lowest voter turnout since 1942 at 36.1 percent. Of the 163 democracies worldwide, the United States ranks 139th in voter participation.

Among several factors causing this decline in voter turnout is the fact that many people do not have time to vote on election day. In fact, according to a recent Census Bureau study, nearly 25 percent of eligible voters cited time constraints or busy work or school schedules as the primary reason for failing to vote in the 2000 Presidential election.

The Democracy Day Act of 2003 addresses this problem by providing many hardworking Americans with the necessary time off from work so they can vote. In addition, the bill would have the added benefit of increasing the number of available election day judges, poll workers and suitable polling places. It would also serve to decrease long lines and the overcrowding that occurs during peak times on election day, as well as reinforcing the notion that voting is an important civic duty.

The movement to ensure that citizens have time to exercise their democratic right to vote has gained significant momentum in various states. According to the Federal Election Commission, 12 states designate election day as a state holiday, some of which close the schools in addition to excusing employees from work. In addition, 20 states provide state employees

time off to vote, and in 26 states, private sector employees may take time off to vote. It is time the Federal Government acts to solidify and coordinate this very important movement.

The right to vote is at the foundation of our democracy, and we must do everything we can to ensure that every eligible American has equal access to the polling booths. I am hopeful that Congress can move quickly to enact this worthwhile and timely legislation.

APPLAUDING ELSIE P. BROWN FOR HER COMMITMENT TO INCREASED HEALTH CARE ACCESS FOR UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS OF GEORGIA

HON. CHARLIE NORWOOD

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 31, 2003

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, Elsie P. Brown has had a remarkable career in public health and primary health care that spans over thirty years. Few Georgians have worked as diligently for so long to address the need for providing quality health care access to Georgia's underserved populations.

Elsie is soon retiring from her current role as the Director of Government Affairs and Membership Services, for the Georgia Association For Primary Health Care, Inc. During Elsie's tenure, she has provided critical leadership and unwavering commitment in bringing to the forefront at the state and national levels the need to improve access to primary care. While Elsie can give you the facts, it has been her ability to work with everyone, from patients to Governors, from physicians to Congressmen that has made her a unique force in this movement. It is largely through her single-minded effort that the state of Georgia has made its very first state appropriation for Federally Qualified Health Centers in Georgia from its portion of the tobacco settlement.

There is no one who has served in Congress from Georgia over the last thirty years who has not had Elsie and her "troops" make the case increased emphasis on access to care for everyone with vigor and persistence. Yet, Elsie has always seemed like a friend rather than an advocate. She understands the workings of government as well as she understands the delivery of primary care. Her work has contributed directly to the creation of Community Health Centers in 37 Georgia counties. This has resulted in access for over 100,000 quality primary care visits for the poor and underserved.

Elsie's retirement will leave a void in the Health center community, but the legacy she leaves as a result of her thirty year commitment to making Georgia a better and healthier state will stand as an example to all who follow her.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ERNIE FLETCHER

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 31, 2003

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, March 27, 2003, despite all my efforts, I was